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DECORATIVE ART IN LONDON.

BY HENRY B. WHATLEY.

THE work of the autumn begins now to be apparent in the shop windows, where many novelties are being shown. Messrs. Jackson & Graham have exhibited some handsome furniture, prepared by them for the Imperial Palace of Japan. Much of this is very elaborate in character, and the gilt cornices are singularly gorgeous. It appears also that our English upholsterers have received some large orders lately from Roumania, and that a consignment of the value of 280,000 florins is destined for the new hotel Charles I. at Kustendjie. Within a month after the opening of the Holborn Restaurant another large building has been opened in London. This is the First Avenue Hotel, situated also in Holborn, and opposite Chancery Lane. It occupies an acre of ground and contains upwards of four hundred bed and sitting rooms. The exterior is pleasing, and the internal arrangements are sumptuous in the extreme. The decorations are very varied in character, and the upholstery also is particularly handsome. Large hotels follow one another so quickly that one is forced to believe either that the habits of the people are changing or that the accommodation will soon largely exceed the requirements of visitors. This, however, is one of those points respecting which the resident finds it most difficult to decide. Ocean steamers are now little more than floating hotels, and it is therefore not surprising that the same luxury should prevail in the one as in the other. A new steamship named the *Tamalipus* has just been completed by Messrs. R. Napier & Sons, the Scottish ship-builders, for the Mexican Transatlantic Company. Accommodation is afforded for 200 cabin passengers, and the fittings have been introduced with an evident desire to unite comfort with display. Different colored velvets, gorgeous draperies and brilliant carpets are seen on all sides, while the more artistic work of the wood-cutter has not been forgotten.

The Prince of Wales has lately enlarged his house at Sandringham, and the other day the new ball-room was used for the first time. Mr. R. W. Edis is the architect, and he has been highly successful in his work. The room is 60 feet long by 30 feet 6 inches wide, the walls being 18 feet high from the floor. On each side of the room is a deep recessed alcove, 25 feet long by 4 feet deep. The south alcove is filled with windows and the north with a magnificent fireplace. At the east end is the minstrels' gallery, the front of which is an open white arcaded balustrade. The walls are painted a delicate fawn color, the lower portion being panelled as a high dado. The ceiling is elaborately panelled in the style of the sixteenth century, and is white, as are all the decorations.

An admirer of Mr. Gladstone, who is a working chairmaker in Lambeth, has asked the Prime Minister for one of the trees cut down at Hawarden, so that he may with his own hands make an

arm chair and table, to be family heirlooms. He wished to pay the value of the tree and the cost of carriage, and a beach trunk about eighteen feet in length was sent to him.

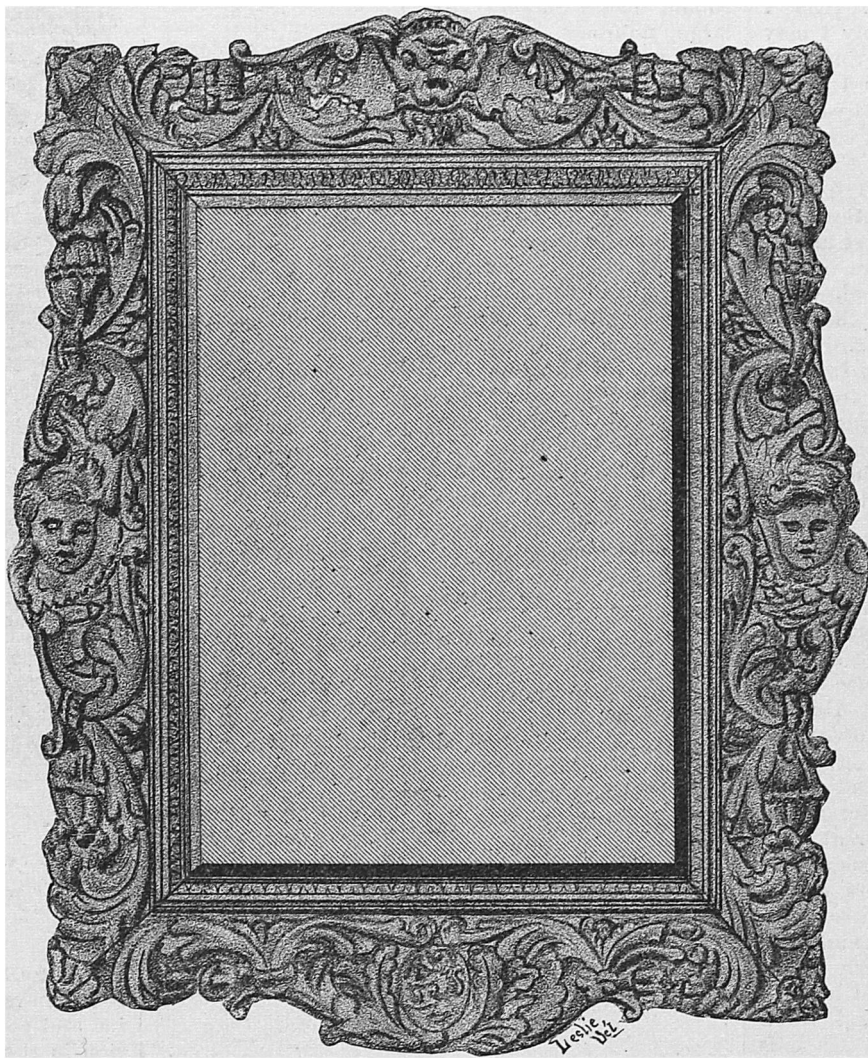
The Carpenters' Company and the Joiners' Company have united to further a praiseworthy and much needed work. They propose to hold an exhibition next year of specimens and illustrations of all matters relating to their several crafts. They offer prizes for models and specimens of work, and also for designs, and if a suitable response is made to their offer, an exhibition of great interest is likely to result. The work will be divided into five classes; the first division will consist of specimens of constructive carpentry, the second will be devoted to constructive and ornamental carpentry, the third to joinery, including staircases and handrails, doors, dados, chimney-

the fragility of these objects, it is marvellous how many have come down to our times, bringing with them a history which otherwise would have been entirely lost. Of course this is owing to the fact that these vases were buried with the dead. There are eighty or ninety different shapes of Greek vases, mostly intended for drinking purposes or for carrying liquids. Some, however, were intended for decorative purposes, and they are sometimes represented as filled with flowers. A novelty in table decoration is now to be seen in several London shops. It consists of a terra cotta vase, covered with a growth of mossy grass, in which cut flowers can be placed. This result is obtained by soaking the vase with water and covering the outside with seed. If the vase is kept filled with water germination commences in about forty-eight hours.

The present is an age of revivals, Old English fancy fairs being one of its latest phases. In Italy the same feeling prevails, and at the National Industrial Exhibition, to be held at Turin in the spring of 1884, there will be erected on the banks of the Po a mediæval Piedmontese castle. The splendid grounds embrace a panorama of some 200 miles of glorious Alpine scenery from Monte Rosa to the confines of the ancient territory of Nice. In this castle and its precincts everything—the furniture, the costumes and the arms—will be in keeping with feudal manners. All around will be grouped the huts and humble cottages of the serfs, constituting a village of the fourteenth century, each dwelling being fitted up so as to be inhabitable. The hostelry and the dwellings of the various artisans and peasants will easily be recognised, and the inhabitants themselves will not be wanting to give life and reality to the fairy scene. My informant tells me that the learned antiquaries engaged have passed sleepless nights while planning with the most scrupulous exactitude all the details.

The number of lectures continually being delivered on art in general, is somewhat wearisome. Mr. Harry Quilter gave one at Manchester a week ago on "The Beginnings of Art," in which he said there was no time for art, it was either good or bad, it was never either new or old-fashioned, for its essential qualities were always the same, and were subject to no change or decay. This is I suppose a sort of paraphrase of *ars longa vita brevis*, but while one must agree with Hippocrates I am inclined to demur to the paraphrase. What is art but nature interpreted by man, and so far as the characteristics of the human

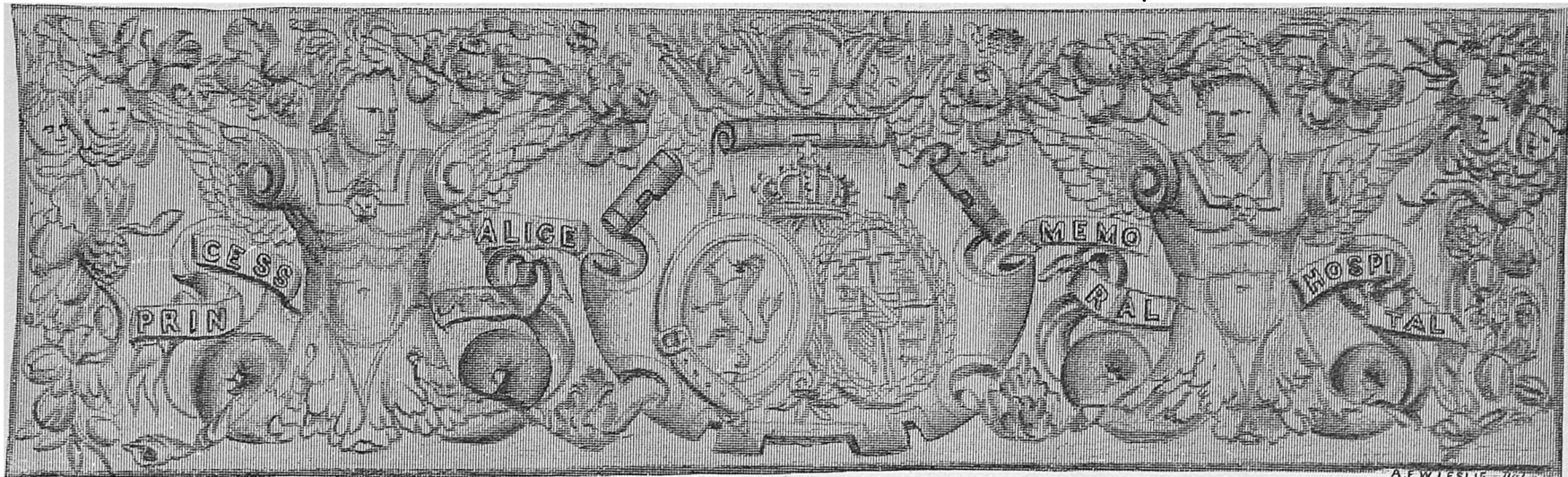
race change at different times, so art will also change. Mr. Morris has offended many by the new departure he has taken by teaching socialism while lecturing on art. He is very much of a pessimist, and says that commercial competition is the death of art. Certainly the substitution of machinery for manual labor has done some harm, but there is still work for the human hand to do, and Mr. Morris does himself injustice when he says art is dead or even dying. It is always exhilarating to listen to Mr. Ruskin's utterances, although we may not be prepared to agree with



Ornamental Carved Wood Frame, by Mr. JOHN WILSON, intended for a Portrait by Mr. Pettie of Mr. George Gurney, Hon. Treasurer of the Princess Alice Memorial Hospital at Eastbourne. The size is 5 feet 10 in. by 4 feet 8 in. Carved in walnut, and deeply and richly gilt.

pieces, pulpits, stalls, cornices, brackets, etc.; the fourth to carving in wood, all to be hand-work, and the fifth division to models or drawings of existing examples, ancient or modern, coming under any of the previous classes. There are four prizes for wood carving (two of £5 and two of £3), and I wish there were more, for this art sadly wants encouragement.

Mr. Cecil H. Smith continues his important course of lectures on Greek Fictile Art, at University College, and the last lecture that he delivered was specially on red-figured vases. Considering



Frieze of the Princess Alice Memorial Hospital at Eastbourne, in Terra Cotta. The photograph is taken from the clay before burning. The idea attempted to be conveyed to the observer is vigorous health, as shown in the figures, heads and fruit. The shields, surrounded by the Grand Ducal Coronet, show the arms of the late Princess Alice and those of her husband the Grand Duke of Hesse Darmstadt. The center figure is symbolic of the spirit of the child in nursing whom the Princess caught the disease which cost her her life. This design is by John Wilson.

all his opinions. How charming is the anecdote he told the other day. Some fifty years ago he bought a little drawing by Copley Fielding of a gleam of sunshine on a bull and a couple of drovers, with some distant hills seen through a soft curtain of driving rain. Of this he says: "An undergraduate friend fresh from eastern travel was staying with us, and came into the room to see the cause of our recent ravishment. He looked at the cheerless scene, and remarked, 'But, Ruskin, what is the use of painting such very bad weather?' To which question I could only make the reply, that there was no such thing as bad weather, but only different kinds of pleasant weather—some demanding, indeed, courage and patience for their enjoyment, but all of them fit-test in their seasons—best for the hills, for the cattle, the drovers, my master and me!" In *Fors Clavigera* Mr. Ruskin makes an observation, to which I vehemently object. He says: "As I meditate more and more closely what reply I may safely make to the now eagerly pressed questioning of my faithful scholars, what books I would have them read, I find the first broadly-swept definition may be—books written in the country. None worth spending time on, and few that are quite safe to touch, have been written in towns." In answer to this, we may say—are there no charms in recollection, and are not the most ardent lovers of the country often to be found in towns? I am a true Londoner, and against this opinion of Mr. Ruskin I gladly put that of Mr. Richard Jefferies, who has been writing with picturesque force on the "Venice of the East End." He vividly describes the floating-out of the shipping from the London Docks, and exclaims, "Why does not a painter come here and place the real romance of these things upon canvas, as Venice has been placed?" A truth is beautifully expressed in these words, "Till it has been painted, and sung by poets, and described by writers, nothing is human."

Mr. Herkomer has been once or twice before the public during the last month, and we all listen to him with pleasure, for his speech is entirely an outcome of his work. He is thoroughly imbued with the idea that the true artist can succeed in all arts, and he himself excels in many. He has founded, on an original plan, a school of art at Bushey, where he lives. His house is growing under his hands, and he, his father and uncle have made the furniture and carved the wood-work. All this as a relaxation from the real business of his life, which is painting. It seems almost absurd to drop from such true teachers as we have mentioned to Mr. Oscar Wilde. I have never seen nor heard this gentleman, and certainly his utterances lately at Chester are not such as to make me wish to do either. Most of what he says is a mere echo of better speakers, and when original, it is scarcely worthy of notice. He tells us that children need only to be taught the beautiful, but some day he may learn that mere beauty is not the highest thing in life. Most of us have found out that in any system of morals beauty is not *always* good, and ugliness not *always* evil.

The question of the housing of the poor has become of late a battle-ground for excited combatants, and there is some fear, when men like the Marquis of Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain descend into the arena, that a question in which all have an interest should become one of party.

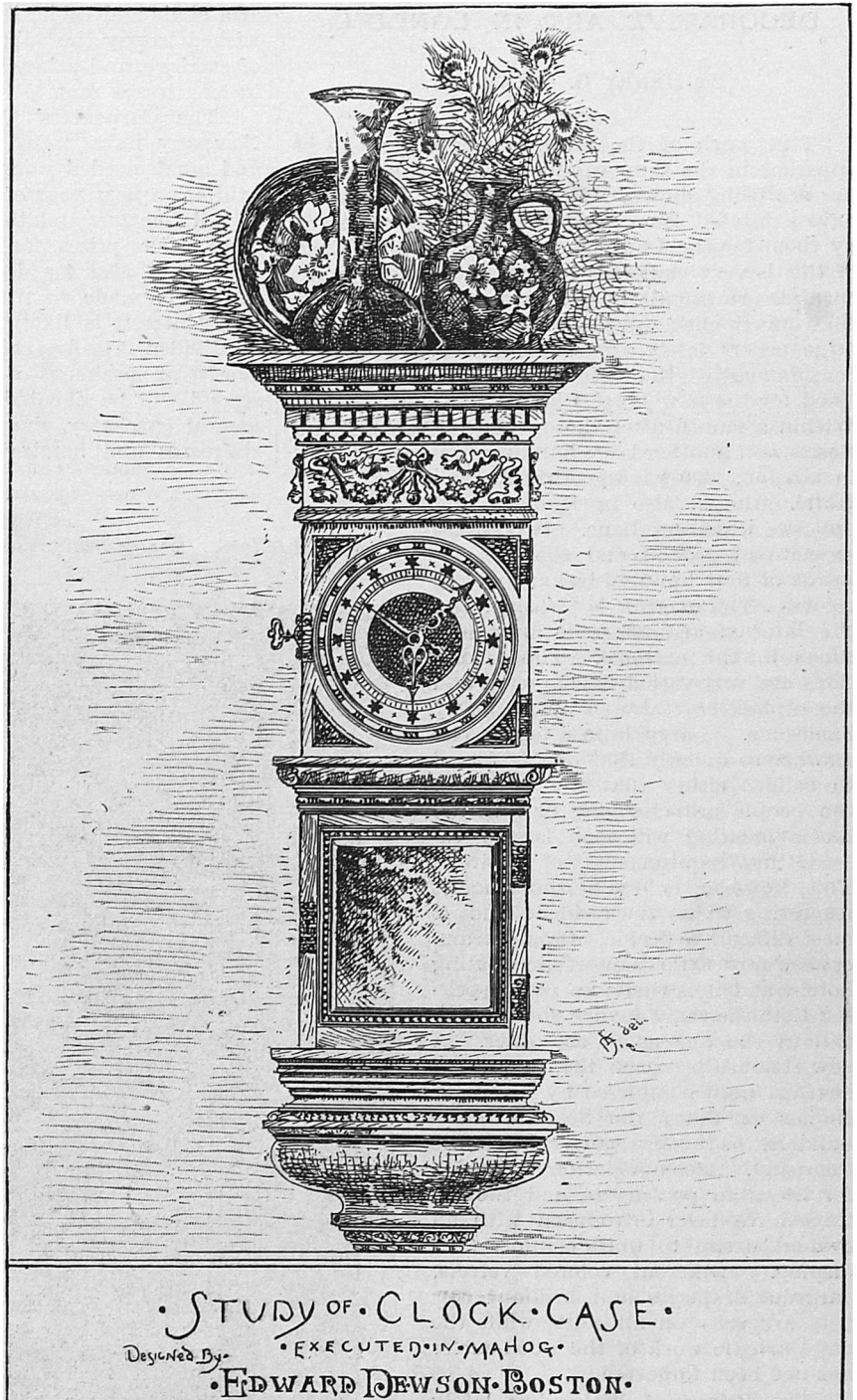
The value of land increases so rapidly, as does also the cost of building, that the rents required at the model lodging houses (which are rising in many parts of the town) are greater than the poor can pay. The deserving poor cannot be allowed to starve, but the political economist finds it difficult to say how he is to be saved. It is a sad thing that the improvement of a city like London, by the removal of unwholesome houses and the replacing them by wholesome ones, should cause misery to large numbers. In connection with this subject, I cannot resist the pleasure of mentioning Mr. George Godwin, F.R.S., who has long been an earnest advocate for the improvement of the dwellings of the working classes. He has just retired from the editorship of the *Builder*, which important paper he founded, and his many friends wish him long life to enjoy his well-earned repose. Mr. Godwin was one of the founders of the "Art Union," and a pioneer in a cause whose followers have since used the watchword, "Art in the Household."

A fairly successful autumn exhibition of the Brooklyn Art Association, which was closed in December, might be ranked not far from that of the National Academy of somewhat earlier record. It included a large proportion of fresh and satisfactory pictures, from which it would have been most gratifying to see a greater number selected at "catalogue prices" for new ownership.

A GLASS CARAFE at each place is a desirable substitute for a water pitcher on the dining table. When used the tumblers should be partially filled with ice, or a dish of cracked ice may be near at hand.

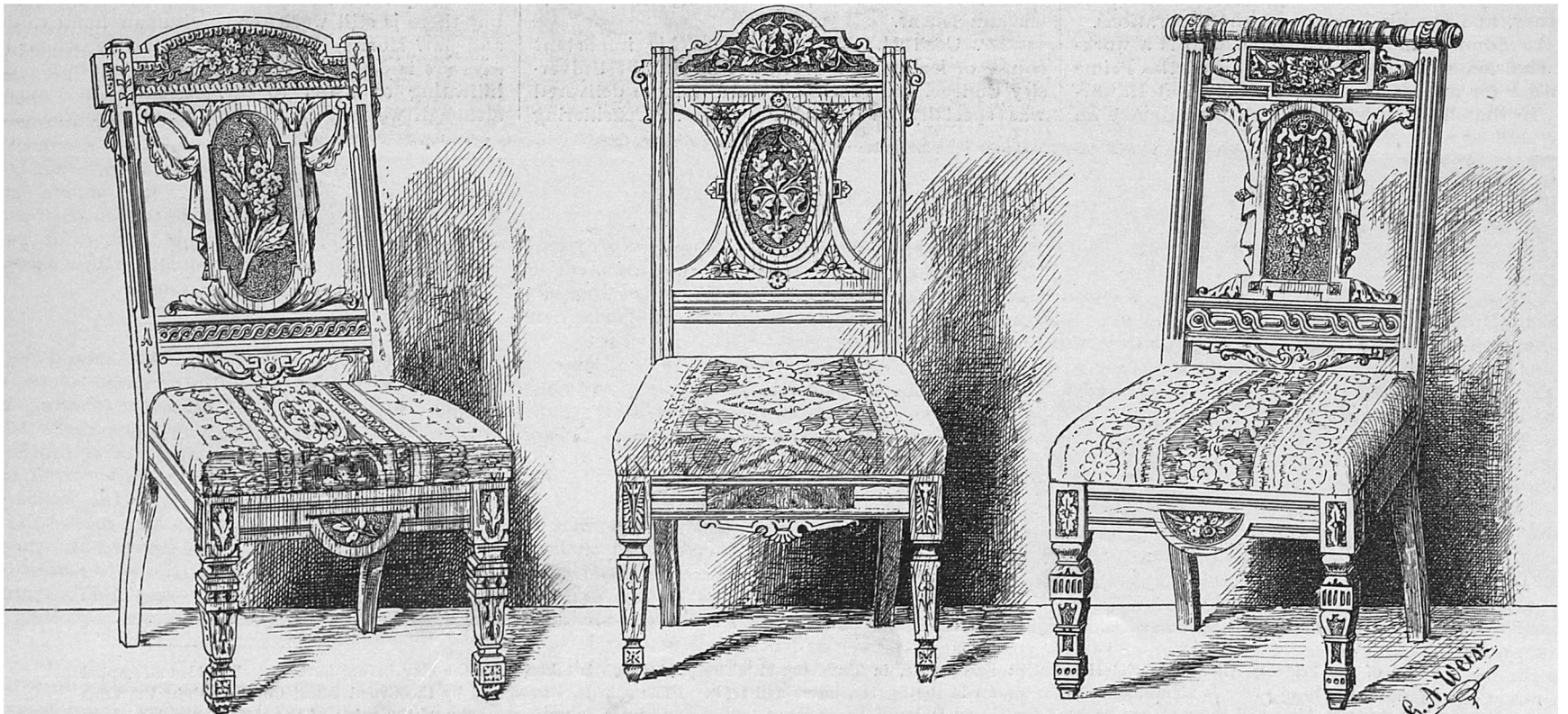
BRASS-LEGGED TABLES are the proper things for afternoon tea.

CRACKLE GLASS lamp shades are pleasing in their effects.



A ROOM that looks as though it were not for use is never attractive, however "artistic" it may be, and comfort is quite as important a consideration in the parlor as elsewhere. Hard, stiff seats of any kind should be resolutely banished, and the best chairs and sofas are those you like best, and which best conform to the natural contour of the human frame in repose.

A SCREEN is always a graceful and agreeable object in a room. "They quiet the glare of blazing lights," says a writer, "subdue harsh angles, shut out unsightly views, and placed here and there about a room, serve to give charming variety."



RECEPTION-ROOM CHAIRS, DESIGNED BY G. A. WEISZ.